

**VA****U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

# News Release

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*Washington, D.C.* -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is providing emergency assistance to veterans, community refugees and its own employees in areas of North Dakota and Minnesota suffering from the staggering effects of recent flooding.

VA Secretary Jesse Brown said, "Our hearts go out to those suffering the devastation of the midwest floods. In response to the President's call for federal agencies to ensure everything is being done to help residents, I have mobilized medical, benefits and administrative staffs to work with veterans and their families to ensure uninterrupted services."

VA has deployed a mobile clinic from the Spokane, Wash., VA Medical Center, staffed by nurses and medical technicians. Anticipating additional calls for assistance, VA's Upper Midwest Veterans Integrated Service Network is recruiting volunteer medical personnel to staff the mobile clinic and disaster assistance centers, and is recruiting mental health professionals to help flood victims cope with this tragedy.

As part of the National Disaster Medical System and by request of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), VA has deployed medical emergency managers to Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota to participate in establishing a command center for combined federal efforts to provide medical services. VA also sent emergency management staff to the Disaster Field Office in Bismarck.

VA has dispatched benefits officials to North Dakota to assist veterans and their families by:

- Working with lenders to extend forbearance to homeowners with VA-guaranteed loans who are in financial distress through no fault of their own, and in establishing a 90-day moratorium, beginning April 8, on initiating foreclosures on flood-affected properties or individuals who have lost employment because of the flood; and
- Providing information and phone numbers to veterans through mortgage servicers.

VA has played an increasingly vital role in disaster relief efforts. Following the Northridge earthquake in Southern California in January 1994, nearly 300 VA employees provided treatment to three of every four victims receiving federal medical care. VA also provided pharmaceutical support and deployed four mobile clinics to the area. During the 1994 floods in Georgia and Florida, VA personnel treated an estimated 2,300 patients. In 1995, VA provided medical logistical support and pharmacy and nursing services in the Virgin Islands in the wake of Hurricane Marilyn.